

MOTION BY MAYOR MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH

JUNE 2, 2015

Managing unused/expired medications is a growing concern facing the County of Los Angeles. According to the National Community Pharmacists Association, an estimated 200 million pounds of unused or expired prescription drugs are stored in American medicine cabinets. They often end up in the wrong hands where inappropriate use can lead to addiction, abuse, serious injury, and even death. According to a report released by the Department of Public Health, in 2013 there were more than 500 deaths, 3,000 hospitalizations and 5,000 emergency visits associated with prescription and over the counter drug overdose in Los Angeles County.

New studies are also demonstrating that pharmaceuticals have an impact on our environment. The World Health Organization recently reported that “a number of studies found trace concentrations of pharmaceuticals in wastewater, various water sources and some drinking-waters.” Municipal wastewater treatment plants are not designed to remove the complex compounds in drugs that end up in the sewer system.

Pharmaceuticals delivered via needles pose an additional set of concerns, posing a risk to health professionals as well as public and private employees in law enforcement and waste management that interact with disposed needles and related sharps waste.

These are serious problems impacting the well-being of our communities. In response, the Sheriff’s Department has set up collection and drop-off boxes at 21 stations where residents can safely, and anonymously, drop off their expired medications and sharps. The County’s Household Hazardous Waste program, managed by Public Works, also collects non-controlled pharmaceuticals and sharps from residents. Unfortunately, the volume of pharmaceuticals is too great for local programs such as this to fully address the problem. We need to do more to increase public awareness of the potential impacts of improper storage and disposal of unused medication and to make it safe and convenient for residents to dispose of unused/expired medications and increase participation.

-MORE-

MOTION

SOLIS _____

RIDLEY-THOMAS _____

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ANTONOVICH _____

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

Direct the Director of Public Works, in coordination with the Chief Executive Office; County Counsel; the Sheriff's Department; the Departments of Health Services, Internal Services, Mental Health and Public Health; and the County Sanitation Districts to:

1. Investigate options for reducing improper use and disposal of unused/expired medications, increasing public awareness and education, and improving the current management system for unused/expired medications in the County;
2. Partner with the pharmaceutical industry to develop a public awareness campaign to educate residents on the importance of how to properly store and dispose of unused medication and the negative effects to the environment when medication enters the waste stream and waterways;
3. Actively support and pursue extended producer responsibility legislation and take-back programs for sharps and pharmaceuticals at the State level, consistent with the County's adopted Legislative Agenda and Roadmap to a Sustainable Waste Management Future;
4. Investigate the feasibility of adopting an Ordinance similar to the pharmaceutical take-back ordinance adopted by the Counties of Alameda, San Mateo, San Francisco and Santa Clara;
5. Investigate the feasibility of utilizing the County's purchasing power to negotiate producer/pharmacy take-back programs; and
6. Report back within 4 months with findings and recommendations.

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